

AIR WAR COLLEGE

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## A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF TOXIC LEADERSHIP

by

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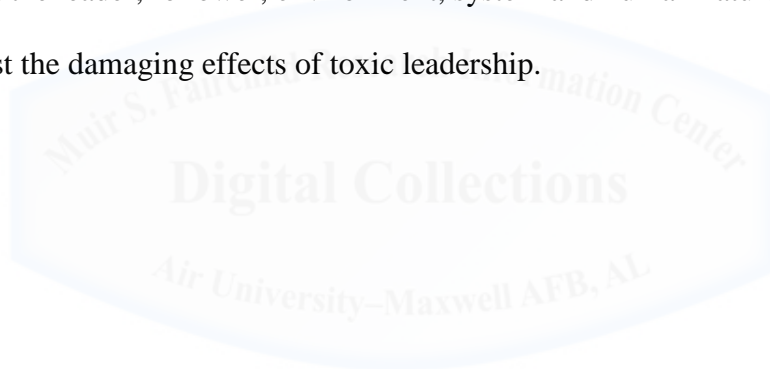
## **Biography**

Commander (CDR) Quincy Davis is 20 year veteran of the United States Coast Guard. He is a Marine Safety Professional and is slated to be the next Deputy Commander of Sector North Carolina. In that assignment, he will be responsible for Coast Guard missions in the entire state of North Carolina to include Search and Rescue, Vessel Inspections, Ports and Waterways Coastal Security, Marine Environmental Protection, Aids to Navigation, Maritime Law Enforcement, and Recreational Boating Safety. CDR Davis is a graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy where he received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Marine and Environmental Sciences in May of 1996. He also earned a Master's Degree in Instructional Systems from Florida State University in August of 2006.



## **Abstract**

Toxic leadership in the military is often seen in the form of bad command climate and/or inefficient mission execution and is contrary to the military's core identity of strong leadership. However, there are differing explanations as to the cause, solution, and even the definition of toxic leadership. This research contains collected and analyzed findings from the military and civilian sectors with a focus on the following aspects of toxic leadership: definition, characteristics and behaviors, cause and effects, and solutions to provide a systemic view of the problem of toxic leadership. The overall finding revealed little difference between the military and civilian sector as it relates to this topic. Across all environments, the human element is the biggest similarity. Toxic leaders have a deep-seated sense of inadequacy that arrests their personal development or a failure to personally achieve Maslow's fourth level related to esteem. However, a systematic solution set (implements solutions at the leader, follower, environment, system and human nature levels) offers the appropriate guard against the damaging effects of toxic leadership.



## Introduction

The U.S. Military invokes many images of professionalism and is known throughout the world as the greatest fighting force in history. This is accomplished through outstanding leadership. Strong leadership is a value that we must consciously protect. If we do not, the destructive forces of toxic leadership will undermine its goals and values. Toxic leadership in the military is often seen in the form of bad command climate and/or inefficient mission execution. However, there are differing explanations as to the cause, solution, and even the definition of toxic leadership. To provide a comprehensive view of the problem of toxic leadership, this research paper will compile and analyze findings from the military and civilian sector and focus on the following aspects of toxic leadership: definition, characteristics and behaviors, cause and effects, and possible solutions. The military should take the time and resources to study the effects of toxic leadership because they are in the business of developing leaders, and the price of poor leadership is devastating. The findings from this essay can be used to support the development of leaders within the U.S. Coast Guard to prevent an environment that unintentionally creates, nurtures, or multiplies toxic leaders.

Toxic leadership is not a new phenomenon. In the book *Surviving Toxic Leaders*, author K. Gangel identifies toxic leadership characteristics in the great biblical patriarch Jacob<sup>1</sup>, who was deceptive and stole his brother's birthright. D. Ludwig and C. Longnecker, the authors of the article "*The Bathsheba Complex*", describe David as a great military leader and king, but also with the following significant toxic leadership behaviors: ethical failure, poor judgment, and murder. A review of military history and current headlines provide proof that examples of toxic leadership continue to this day. "*The Army recently released a study reporting that 80 percent of the officers and NCOs polled had observed toxic leaders in action and that 20 percent had worked for a toxic leader.*"<sup>2</sup> This topic is important because good leadership is essential to mission success. At all levels of an organization, strong leadership is required to maximize productivity, create a positive environment, and ensure relevance. Good leadership is imperative because organizations often emulate the personality of their leaders.<sup>3</sup> If not careful, the seeds of toxic leadership can spread and impact the

effectiveness of an organization<sup>4</sup> by negatively influencing the values, norms, and behaviors of an organization for years.<sup>5</sup>

Leaders must balance organizational requirements for mission execution with maintaining both relevance and a positive environment for subordinates. This idea creates a triangle of competing demands that must be balanced for an organization to be successful. When out of balance, the organization will likely suffer. *“This problem is exacerbated when promotion decisions are focused on the leader obtaining results, because now the toxic leader is reinforced, and is in a position to negatively affect even more individuals.”*<sup>6</sup>

The above quote describes an organization on the brink of a major toxic leadership problem. Some leaders put themselves, career, and mission focus solely as the only priority, with little to no regard for the impact on subordinates. When leaders place their own well-being and power above their supporters’ needs, “followers suffer poisonous effects.” In all, a leader who puts their own needs before that of his/her team – fails to understand effective leadership and opens a door for potential toxic environment. This is contrary to a healthy work environment, which is characterized as a place where all employees believe they are valued for their contributions. An example of this kind of leadership comes from advice echoed to me many times over the years by many different people that “if you take care of your people, the other variables will take care of themselves.”

In this research paper, I explore publications about toxic leader behaviors across two domains: military and civilian sectors. I propose that findings from both domains will be similar because toxic leadership is not just a military problem, but a problem for humans in all facets of leadership positions. This research paper will help military leaders better understand toxic leader behaviors and look for common areas to provide the most complete view of the problem and potential solutions. This literature review includes findings from several research papers and numerous books – eight publications in total that explore the behaviors of toxic leaders. I also created one table located in Appendix A that provides a summary of each reference and specifically what each author concluded about the following aspects of toxic leadership: Definition, Characteristics and Behaviors,

Causes and Outcomes, and Solutions. To understand toxic leadership, I will start with a working definition of the topic.

## Definitions of Toxic Leadership

The book entitled the *Contrarian's Guide to Leadership*, by Steven B. Sample contains the following idea, "The very concept of leadership is elusive and tricky. It is hard to define in a way that is satisfactory to everyone, although most people believe they know it when they see it."<sup>7</sup> This statement is true for both good and toxic leadership. "Crafting even a rough definition of toxic leaders is a major challenge,"<sup>8</sup> hence there is not one consistent definition. These seven definitions listed in Table 1 describe the general essence of toxic leadership.

**Table 1: Definitions of Toxic Leadership**

<p>Focused on visible short-term mission accomplishment. <u>They provide superiors with impressive, articulate presentations and enthusiastic responses to missions.</u> But, they are unconcerned about, or oblivious to, staff or troop morale, and or climate. They are seen by majority of subordinates as arrogant, self-serving, inflexible, and petty. (Steele 2011)</p>	<p>Inwardly motivated, inherently <i>destructive</i>, and violate the legitimate interests of the organization. Bad leadership that left unchecked compromises the organization's values and norms, and promotes noncompliant behaviors. (Aubrey 2012)</p>	<p>Leaders who take part in <i>destructive behaviors</i> and show signs of <b>dysfunctional personal characteristics</b>. To count as toxic, these behaviors and qualities of character must inflict some reasonably serious and enduring harm on their followers and their organization. (Williams 2005)</p>	<p>Leaders who take part in <i>destructive behaviors</i> and show signs of <b>dysfunctional personal characteristics</b>. Commanders, who put their own needs first, micro-managed subordinates, behaved in a mean spirited manner or displayed poor decision making. (Box 2012)</p>
<p>Normal by-products of organizational life that can have serious negative effects on individuals and their organizations. J. Lemmergaard and S. Louise Muhr (2013)</p>	<p>Leaders who engage in numerous <i>destructive behaviors</i> and who exhibit certain <b>dysfunctional personal characteristics</b>. To count as toxic, these behaviors and qualities of character must inflict some reasonably serious and enduring harm on their followers and their organization. (Lipman – Blumen 2005)</p>	<p>Those who <b>abuse the power</b> they wield, particularly over subordinates, to serve and satisfy personal ends. (Box 2012)</p>	

There is agreement amongst the various definitions of toxic leadership from the literature reviewed, but their differences also provide valuable insight into the dynamics of toxic leadership and provide a reason why toxic leaders can go undetected. This literature supports three main parts to defining toxic leadership: destructive behavior, dysfunctional personality characteristics, and a negative impact on the organization. The Author, Jean Lipman–Blumenone describes these factors in his book, "the *Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians and How We Can Survive Them.*"



The research paper entitled “*Antecedents & Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*” by John P. Steele highlights a positive aspect within his definition in Table 1 and the following comment; “Results confirm that leaders who were classified as toxic got their intended results more than any other leadership type,”<sup>9</sup> however only by a small margin. Yet, the results rarely outweigh the negative impacts of toxic leaders. Toxic leaders “provide superiors with impressive, articulate presentations and enthusiastic responses to missions.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, it acknowledges that toxic leaders are good performers, especially they are good at providing the necessary care and feeding up the chain, which provides them space and a cover to create a toxic atmosphere down their respective chains. “Simply put, they produce results. Although it can be argued that these results are short-lived and ultimately damaging to the organization. In an effort to achieve a desired result, organizations and followers may tolerate a toxic leader and the effect he or she may have on the organization.”<sup>11</sup>

The authors J. Lemmergaard and S. Louise Muhr provided the following unique supporting definition – “normal by-product of organizational life that can have serious negative effects on individuals and their organizations”.<sup>12</sup> This unique view supports my belief that the findings concerning toxic leadership will be similar regardless of the domain and is supported through a shared agreement concerning human nature by reasonable people, which is, “no one is perfect.”<sup>13</sup> Toxic leadership is not an anomaly, but to be expected. Even leaders who are widely applauded as exemplary are not necessarily without their occasional toxic chinks.<sup>14</sup> “Organizational members are simply from time-to-time prone to act in ways that undermine efficiency, or conflict with the desires of the organization’s dominant coalition,”<sup>15</sup> or in the case of the military, in direct conflict with the Service’s core values.

Nevertheless, due to the significant agreement of the definition of toxic leadership among the literature reviewed the following definition by Jean Lipman-Blumen provides the most descriptive and inclusive definition of toxic leadership.

“Leaders who engage in numerous destructive behaviors and who exhibit certain dysfunctional personal characteristics. To count as toxic, these behaviors and qualities of character must inflict some reasonably serious and enduring harm on their followers and their organization.”<sup>16</sup>

The definition helps to answer the question “what is toxic leadership?” and the characteristics detailed in the next section provide a description of toxic leadership.

## Characteristics of a Toxic Leader

The literature review also revealed the following characteristics of toxic leadership, see Table 2.

These numerous personal characteristics feed toxic leadership, allowing some leaders to earn their toxic stripes.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 2: Toxic Leader Characteristics**

Destructive Behavior...Results In Negative Impact	Dysfunctional Personality	Positive Aspects of Personality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Deceptive</li> <li>➤ Incompetent</li> <li>➤ Ignorant</li> <li>➤ Cruel</li> <li>➤ Evil</li> <li>➤ Greed</li> <li>➤ Mistrust</li> <li>➤ Lack of restraint</li> <li>➤ Manipulate people</li> <li>➤ Malevolent</li> <li>➤ Abusive</li> <li>➤ Bad leadership</li> <li>➤ Bullies</li> <li>➤ Corrosive leadership</li> <li>➤ Harassing leaders</li> <li>➤ Jerks</li> <li>➤ Assholes</li> <li>➤ Tyrannical</li> <li>➤ Incompetence</li> <li>➤ Irresponsible</li> <li>➤ Avarice And Greed</li> <li>➤ Deception</li> <li>➤ Malicious</li> <li>➤ Malfeasance</li> <li>➤ Malevolent</li> <li>➤ Failure to understand and to act competently and effectively in leadership situations.</li> <li>➤ Reckless disregard for the costs of their actions to others as well as to themselves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Lack Of Integrity</li> <li>➤ Avarice</li> <li>➤ Cowardice</li> <li>➤ Cynicism</li> <li>➤ Narcissism</li> <li>➤ Paranoia</li> <li>➤ Megalomania</li> <li>➤ Moral Blind spots</li> <li>➤ Demanding</li> <li>➤ Autocratic</li> <li>➤ Unrelenting</li> <li>➤ Lacks empathy</li> <li>➤ Personal inadequacy</li> <li>➤ Maladjusted</li> <li>➤ Malcontent</li> <li>➤ Egotistic</li> <li>➤ Malfunctioning</li> <li>➤ Maladjusted</li> <li>➤ Sense Of Inadequacy</li> <li>➤ Malcontent</li> <li>➤ Amoral</li> <li>➤ Cowardice</li> <li>➤ Insatiable Ambition</li> <li>➤ Egotism</li> <li>➤ Arrogance</li> <li>➤ Selfish Values</li> <li>➤ Lack Of Integrity</li> <li>➤ Insatiable Ambition prompts leaders to put their own sustained power, glory, and fortunes above followers' well-being</li> <li>➤ Enormous Ego that blinds leaders to the shortcomings of their own character and thus limit their capacity for self-renewal.</li> <li>➤ Arrogance</li> <li>➤ Amoral prevents acknowledging their mistakes and instead leads to blaming other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Charming</li> <li>➤ Forge quick relationships</li> <li>➤ Ability to charm supervisors</li> <li>➤ Self-confidence</li> <li>➤ Magnetic enthusiasm</li> </ul>

Out of the eight studies reviewed for this research paper, only five discussed the characteristics of toxic leadership. There were nine characteristics supported by the remaining literature: *insatiable ambition*, *arrogance*, *cowardice*, *egotism*, *incompetence*, *lack of integrity*, *maladjusted*, *malcontent*, and *malevolence*.

These characteristics were discussed in at least two of the publications reviewed. The following characteristics were mentioned in three of the studies: maladjusted, malcontent, malevolent, egotistic, and ambitious. “Toxic leaders are defined as leaders who take part in destructive behaviors and show signs of dysfunctional personal characteristics.” Most of the repeated characteristics fell within the classification of dysfunctional personality traits. There was also some overlap between the behavior and characteristics categories within the eight publications reviewed.

In “*The Allure of Toxic Leaders*” by Jean Lipman-Blumen, the author described that “leaders may exhibit higher or lower levels on any of these qualities.” Meaning that someone could demonstrate one or more of the above characteristics, but not be considered a toxic leader; or someone could show one or many of the above characteristics and create a toxic environment that damages the organization. “Just how much deceit, cynicism, corruption or ineptitude a leader must demonstrate to qualify as toxic is difficult to specify.”<sup>18</sup> Dr. Gene Kamana of the Air War College, Department of Leadership and Warfighting, suggested in the Right to Lead Assessment Model the idea that “it might be helpful to think of character as a balance sheet, one that takes into account the positive and negative aspects of who you are as a person and a leader. People either possess overall positive (good) or negative (poor) character.”<sup>19</sup> In *Toxic Leaders – When Organizations Go Bad* by Marcia Lynn Whicker, she writes that “the hallmark characteristic of toxic leaders: they all feel inadequate.”<sup>20</sup> She also argues that this distinguishing characteristic points to the biggest difference between toxic leaders and good leaders.

The publications reviewed overwhelmingly described toxic leaders with negative characteristics. See Table 2. However, Colonel Box in his publication titled “*Toxic Leadership in the Military Profession*” states that, “toxic leader’s self-confidence, magnetic enthusiasm and unrelenting drive to attain prestige and power enable them to climb the rungs of power and to be effective in some aspects of leadership.”<sup>21</sup> This idea is supported by J. Lipman-Blumen’s reminder that it is unlikely that we will find saints in the military.

“Do not look for saints among formal leaders. Saints rarely seek elected or appointed office. They seldom enter the rough-and-tumble of politics or the corporate world. Nor are we likely to encounter saintly leaders in the spit and polish of the traditional military.”<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, the potential for toxic leadership exists in each leader because even beloved icons of leadership can display frailties.<sup>23</sup> However, the potential for toxic leadership does not change an environment, but it is when leaders actually deliver on that potential and display toxic behaviors.

## Behaviors of Toxic Leaders

Table 3 shows the behaviors of toxic leaders described within the publications reviewed.

**Table 3: Behaviors of Toxic Leaders**

<b>Bully</b> Pugnacious, bitter, intensely angry at the world and vehemently jealous of others who outperform them.	<b>Evil</b> When the bully leader's brutality becomes physical to the point of committing atrocities	<b>Corrupt</b> Motivated by power and greed. This person will lie, cheat, or steal to feed his need for power and money.	<b>Street Fighter</b> Perhaps alluring, egotistical, yet charming, and maintains a competitive vision of winning at all cost.	<b>Callous</b> Uncaring, unkind and dismissive of others' needs, wants, and wishes.
➤ Behaving aggressively toward others	➤ Physical Violence	➤ Unethical	➤ Manipulation of people and things	➤ Leaving their followers (& non-followers) worse off than they found them.
➤ Denigrating subordinates	➤ Discrimination	➤ Misleading Followers	➤ Consciously feeding their followers illusions that enhance their power & impair the followers' capacity to act independently.	➤ Playing to the basest fears and needs of the followers.
➤ Overly critical of work that is done well	➤ Exclusion	➤ Lack Of Integrity	➤ Maliciously setting constituents against one another.	➤ Failing to nurture other leaders.
➤ Intimidating	➤ Harassment		➤ Treating their own followers well, but persuading them to hate others.	
➤ Stifling Destructive Criticism	➤ Subverting structures and processes intended to generate truth, justice, and excellence.			
➤ Intimidation/Bullying	➤ Structuring the costs of overthrowing them as a trigger for the downfall of the system they lead.			
➤ Identifying scapegoats and group discord.	➤ Ignoring or promoting incompetence, cronyism, and corruption.			
	➤ Engaging in unethical, illegal and criminal acts.			

The five main behavior types of toxic leaders supported by the literature are Evil, Bully, Corrupt, Street Fighter, and Callous. These five behavior types captured the majority of the individual behavior descriptors from the literature. A complete list of all the behaviors represented in this study can be found in Table 1 located in Appendix A. Normally, toxic leaders will engage in one or more of the destructive behaviors listed in Table 3. *J. Lipman-Blumen* stated *In The Allure of Toxic Leadership* that, "the practice of these behaviors ranges from conscious engagement in despicable acts – to unconscious toxic behaviors."<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, the culture of an

organization is influenced through the reproduction of toxic behavior. In the “The Effect of Toxic Leadership,” by Darrell Aubrey, the author wrote that “abusive behaviors may become ingrained in the organization’s culture as they are practiced and encouraged by the leadership.”<sup>25</sup> According to Kusy and Halloway, negative behavior triggers an adverse response and “soon the triggers and reactions begin to damage the team or individuals, who may react in ways that reinforce the toxic behaviors.”<sup>26</sup>

Emulation is a significant danger of toxic leadership. Emulation may be invisible at first but soon crop up, threatening every dynamic of the organization. Like an invisible toxin in drinking water, its accumulation and inherent dangers soon begin to cause harm. D. Abubrey states the following:

“Organizational corruption extends beyond the behaviors and traits of individuals and encompasses the effect that corrupt acts have on the group, unit, or organization. Left unchecked these actions can spread to others of the organization and amplify the scope of the problem in ways that threaten the culture and climate of the organization....”<sup>27</sup>

As a result of emulation, the common practice of only removing toxic leaders from positions of leadership due to a bad command climate alone may be an insufficient response. There should at least be an understanding that some of the actions leading to the bad climate was likely multiplied by other members of the command. Solutions to remedy toxic leadership must be systemic and involve all variables that impact a toxic leader. Solutions will be discussed later in this paper, before that discussion it is important to understand the outcomes of toxic leadership and negative impacts on the organization.

## **Outcomes of Toxic Leadership**

The literature review also revealed the following outcomes of toxic leadership; see Table 4 on the following page.

**Table 4: Outcomes of Toxic Leadership**

Green Light	Yellow Light Leadership		Red Light Leadership		The Bottom	
Trust and cooperation	Disappointment and Disillusionment	Outrage and Contempt	Covert Game Playing	Open Warfare	Siege mentality	Isolation and Alienation
Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three	Stage Four	Stage Five	Stage Six	Stage Seven
A positive culture is based on positive shared norms. Members may come to see toxic leadership as normal, and conform willingly.	Control/negatively influence the values, norms, and behaviors of the organizations for years.			Mutiny	Death (Genocide)	
Commitment & retention	Erosion of trust				Have poisonous effects that cause serious harm to their organizations and their followers.	
	Subordinates who perceive that their supervisors are more abusive are less satisfied with their job...and less willing to perform pro-social behaviors (initiative, helping, and loyalty).				Toxic organizations eventual failure to carry out the mission (Ineffectiveness)	
	Break-down in communications					
	Reduced effectiveness					
	Failure to develop leaders					
	Diminished follower					
	Undermine organizational values by redefining the organization’s goals and assigning importance ( <b>creates an environment for emulation of toxic leader</b> ).					

In *Toxic Leaders – When Organizations Go Bad* by Marcia Lynn Whicker, she provides a very useful model for displaying the outcomes of toxic leadership in an organization. The model is called the ‘Anatomy of Organizational Decline’. This model is distinguished by three colors and a distinguisher: green, yellow, red and the bottom. It is further classified using the seven stages listed in the below table:

**Table 5: Stages of Organizational Decline Due to Toxic Leadership**

Green	Yellow		Red		The Bottom <sup>28</sup>	
<i>Stage One:</i>	<i>Stage Two:</i>	<i>Stage Three:</i>	<i>Stage Four:</i>	<i>Stage Five:</i>	<i>Stage Six:</i>	<i>Stage Seven:</i>
Trust and cooperation	Disappointment and Disillusionment	Outrage and Contempt	Covert Game Playing	Open Warfare	Siege mentality	Isolation and Alienation

The anatomy begins with a positive organization, green, and then declines to the final state, the bottom. Each stage of decline has certain outcomes that make it distinguishable to outsiders, but people on the inside, experiencing the strife and grief, may not recognize these outcomes. I have grouped all of the outcomes that were listed in the publications in the appropriate color categories. The data demonstrates both organizational-level and individual-level outcomes that range from Commitment and Retention to Genocide. Toxic leadership affects soldiers’ well-being, retention, and mission accomplishment. The outcomes listed in Table 4, negatively

impact the range of organizational decline; specifically, the outcomes of diminished followers and emulation.

Both diminished followers and emulation are addressed in the article titled “*Antecedents & Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*” by John P. Steele. He addressed the issue of negative impact through the lens of diminished follower by highlighting the following:

Toxic leadership may be even more damaging in a military setting than in civilian corporations because the impact that toxic leaders have on their subordinates’ performance is greater for those who identify a strong sense of value and meaning in their jobs (as attributed to individuals that serve in the military). In other words, the best Soldiers are the ones who are most likely to be affected by toxic leaders.<sup>29</sup>

This can result in the organization losing gifted people that are not quickly replaced, which often put the effectiveness of the organization at risk. For example, losing good shipmates can immediately impact workload distribution causing decreased morale. Steele also wrote that, “*unfortunately, 50% of toxic leaders are also expected to achieve a higher level of leadership responsibility, and are still emulated by 18% of their subordinates*”. As a result, it is not necessarily failure to develop leaders, but more about who are future leaders learning from. The promotion rate for toxic leaders, their negative impact on strong performers, and their followership require that the military continue to identify, educate, and take the appropriate actions to ensure the poisonous effects of toxic leadership are minimized within the military ranks. The outcomes of toxic leadership is important for identification but the causes help leaders implement the best solution to both fix and prevent toxic leadership.

## Causes of Toxic Leadership

The literature review also revealed the following causes of toxic Leadership; see Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Causes of Toxic Leadership**

Leaders	Followers	Environment	System Causes of Toxic Leadership	Nature
Power	Low maturity	Instability	Attraction	Leaders are human – with both negative and positive tendencies.
Personality	Ethics/Values	Perceived Threats	Selection	Sin
Ideology	Similar View	Cultural Values	Attrition	Emotions; Being Human.
Enormous Ego that blinds leaders to the shortcomings of their own character and	Psychological needs of followers.	Lacks of Checks	Inherent paradoxical nature of leadership Some of the toxic	



Leaders	Followers	Environment	System Causes of Toxic Leadership	Nature
thus limit their capacity for self-renewal.			leadership types reflect some desired qualities of military leadership	
Their deep-seated sense of inadequacy has arrested their personal development.		Migration- changes in structure or work assignments designed to accommodate a toxic person.	Inadequate development (i.e. Mentors...positive role model to emulate)	
Failure to personally achieve Maslow's level four dealing with esteem or level five dealing with self-actualization and giving.		The Disbursement of knowledge and power within an organization.	Failure to place limits on power or to recognize toxic behavior in subordinates.	
Enabling or overlooking negative behaviors to retain a productive toxic person. (allows emulation)				
Lack of accountability				

Each category in Table 6 is important and offers us insight into the challenges of toxic leadership.

Author John P. Steele, “*Antecedents & Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*,” provides a very useful leadership model based on three factors: leaders, followers, and the environment.<sup>30</sup> Based on this research, I propose to add a fourth factor: Nature. Nature may also contribute to toxic leadership as some of the toxic leaders’ behavior may be inherent to being human.

Personality also plays a role in the cause of toxic leadership. J.P. Steele suggests that toxic leadership may not be amendable to change because of its correlation with personality.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, J.P. Steele did not agree that toxic leadership was permanent. He recommends that education and training early in a person’s career can prevent toxic tendencies later on. Additionally, many publications point to toxic qualities as an internal struggle, something deep seated that may have happened early in life. For example, in *Toxic Leaders – When Organizations Go Bad* by Marcia Lynn Whicker, she explains that toxic leaders fail to personally achieve Maslow’s “level four” dealing with esteem, or “level five” dealing with self-actualization and giving. Instead toxic leaders find themselves stuck on “level two,” security needs.<sup>32</sup>

“Maslow categorized human needs into a five-level pyramid and suggested that people move upward as needs at a particular level are met. The levels start with basic physiological needs forming the base and then ascend through safety, love and belonging, esteem, and finally, self-actualization. Until needs and desires are met at any given level, the individual cannot progress to the next level. While “trustworthy leaders usually operate at level four or five,”<sup>5</sup> destructive leaders are still concerned with meeting their safety needs at level two or possibly their love and belonging needs at level three”.<sup>33</sup>



Nevertheless, implementation of a systemic solution set that addresses causal factors found in the leadership, follower, environment, and nature dimensions should ensure that the toxicity level within the organization remains insignificant.

The causes listed in the Follower column are both passive and active. A follower's participation may be passive because they may not provide feedback to the leaders about his or her toxic leadership and how it is perceived.

“It's not that leaders don't care how they are perceived; most do. But they incorrectly assume that they can decipher this information themselves. Worse, they think that if they are having a negative effect, someone will correct them if they're wrong.”<sup>34</sup>

However, sometimes due to ethical challenges, low maturity, and/or similar ideology, followers may actively reinforce toxic leadership.

Similar to followers, organizational leaders can create an environment that allows toxic leaders to thrive. For example, the nature of the military's distribution of authority and sometimes the geographic distance from the leader's chain of command can make accountability difficult or nonexistent. This may exacerbate each causal factor. However, knowledge of these factors will help leaders create an environment that does not contribute to toxic leadership or solutions correct toxic leadership.

## Solutions to Toxic Leadership

The literature review also revealed the following solutions for toxic leadership, see Table: 7.

**Table 7: Solutions to Toxic Leadership**

Leaders	Followers	Environment	System	Nature
Evidence of emulation	Lack of emulation	Restructuring the organization	Selection	Religion/ Relationship with God
Training	Direct feedback	Expanding the organizational resource base.	Evaluation	
Unbiased feedback (surveys)	Resilience training	Abolish the organization	Education	
360 Evaluation	Positive affectivity	Accountability	Assignment	
Coaching-trained facilitators	Ingatiation	Leadership	Improve methods of organizational governance (possibly	

Leaders	Followers	Environment	System	Nature
Regulate moderating behaviors	Undermine		prevents emulation) Create a committee to coach, teach and mentor all future brigade and battalion commanders	
Publicly admit any behavior which has caused your people hurt or discouragement.	Overthrow		Multi-Rater Assessments (360-degree multi-source assessment)	
Ask for forgiveness and prayer and make someone you trust a monitor of your public behavior. Be patient.	Leave the organization		Academic institution reform (improve leadership training/ education).	
Developing self-insight/awareness			Counsel	
Maintaining self-control			Impose term limits	
			Removing toxic leaders	
Accountability				
Positive Leadership				
Confront				
Tolerate				

In the book *Surviving Toxic Leaders: How to Work for Flawed People in Churches, Schools, and Christian Organizations* by Kenneth O. Gangel, the author states that the first step is to admit that you have the disease, and once that happens you are well on your way to a cure.<sup>35</sup> K. Gangel reports that “Stanford Graduate School of Business has an advisory council made up of 75 distinguished people. Each of them was asked to recommend the most important capability for leaders to develop. They unanimously selected self-awareness”.<sup>36</sup> Self-awareness can be improved through a variety of methods. Some are: 360 evaluations, unbiased feedback, mentorship, counsel, training/education and confronting. In “*Antecedents & Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*” by John P. Steele, he offers this simple test as an indicator to determine if leaders are viewed negatively, “observe if their subordinates emulate their behaviors”.<sup>37</sup> Data suggest that positive leaders see a strong majority of their subordinates emulating them and sharing the leader’s vision versus just the opposite for toxic leaders.<sup>38</sup>

Once the toxic behavior is identified, a range of solutions exists. One immediate solution is training. Training is implemented to fill a knowledge, skill, or attitude gap.<sup>39</sup> Some of the above solutions are beneficial because they are preventive in nature. Specifically, the following ideas help to prevent the negative impacts of toxic leadership: unbiased feedback, 360 evaluations, education, improve methods of organizational governance, term limits, accountability and positive leadership. Implementing solutions may bring greater self-awareness and ultimately self-correction of individuals with toxic tendencies, but also remind organizational leaders of their responsibility to hold subordinates accountable for actions contrary to the organization's core values.

## **Recommendations**

I recommend the following as a result of this literature review:

- The Air War College should provide a broader prospective regarding the study of toxic leadership. The comprehensive table found in Appendix A should be helpful in providing a broader perspective.
- The U.S. Coast Guard Leadership Department should include the topic of toxic leadership into each leadership course – officer, enlisted, and civilian. This would provide early awareness of the topic and provide solutions on how to prevent, correct, and minimize its negative impacts. At a minimal, the topic of toxic leadership should be introduced and discussed in the following forums: Coast Guard Academy Leadership Training, Coast Guard Officer Training, and the Coast Guard's Chief Petty Officer Academy. Additionally, the following courses should include instruction time on the topic of toxic leadership:
  - All Command Assignment Preparatory Training
  - Leadership and Management School (LAMS)
  - Executive Potential Program
  - Management Development I
  - Management Development II
  - Midgrade Officer Career Transition Course (MOTC)
  - Senior Leadership Principles and Skills Course (SLPS)

At a minimum, the instruction should include the following elements:

Definition of toxic leadership. The below definition best describes toxic leadership because it contains the three biggest defining factors: 1) Destructive behaviors, 2) Dysfunctional personal Characteristics, and 3) Inflict harm to the organization.

“Leaders who engage in numerous destructive behaviors and who exhibit certain dysfunctional personal characteristics. To count as toxic, these behaviors and qualities of character must inflict some reasonably serious and enduring harm on their followers and their organization.”<sup>40</sup>

Characteristics of the toxic leader. The main characteristics are selfishness and a personal struggle to fill an internal fleeting peace. Other characteristics include the following:

- Maladjusted
- Malcontent
- Malevolent
- Egotistic
- Ambitious

Each of the above characteristics is aligned with the idea of inadequacy and a longing to move higher on Maslow’s hierarchy.

Behavior types of toxic leaders. The following types of behavior describe the majority of toxic leaders:

- Bully - Pugnacious, bitter, intensely angry at the world and vehemently jealous of others who outperform them.
- Evil - When the bully leader’s brutality becomes physical to the point of committing atrocities.
- Corrupt - Motivated by power and greed. This person will lie, cheat, or steal to feed his need for power and money.
- Street Fighter - Perhaps alluring, egotistical, yet charming, and maintains a competitive vision of winning at all cost.
- Callous - Uncaring, unkind, and dismissive of others’ needs, wants, and wishes.

Outcomes of toxic leadership. The below table contains the outcomes of toxic leadership. The description includes a color designation, description of organization decline, plus the corresponding negative outcomes associated with each phase.

Yellow Light Leadership		Red Light Leadership		The Bottom	
<b>Disappointment and Disillusionment</b>	<b>Outrage and Contempt</b>	<b>Covert Game Playing</b>	<b>Open Warfare</b>	<b>Siege mentality</b>	<b>Isolation and Alienation</b>
<i>Stage Two</i>	<i>Stage Three</i>	<i>Stage Four</i>	<i>Stage Five</i>	<i>Stage Six</i>	<i>Stage Seven</i>
Break-down in communications					
Reduced effectiveness					
Failure to develop leaders					
Diminished follower					
Undermine organizational values by redefining the organization's goals and assigning importance (creates an environment for emulation of toxic leader).					

Causes of toxic leadership. The below categories and corresponding causes help group the individual and organizational causal factors of toxic leadership.

**Leaders –**

- Failure to personally achieve Maslow's level four – dealing with esteem or level five dealing with self-actualization and giving.
- Personality defects
- Enabling or overlooking negative behaviors to retain a productive toxic person (the lack of accountability – allows emulation).

**Followers –**

- Ethics/Values
- Similar view
- Lack of accountability

**Environment –**

- Cultural values
- Lacks checks and balance
- Conducive to negative behaviors
- Lack of accountability

**System Causes of Toxic Leadership –**

- Inherent paradoxical nature of leadership. Some of the toxic leadership types reflect some desired qualities of military leadership.
- Attrition
- Enabling or overlooking negative behaviors to retain a productive toxic person (the lack of accountability – allows emulation).

**Nature –**

- Leaders are human with both negative and positive tendencies.

Possible solution sets. A solution to toxic leadership will include self-awareness, positive leadership, and accountability. A solution set is suggested because toxic leadership exists within a system and multiple

variables must be addressed to have a successful solution. The table below contains other solutions based on the systematic view of the problem.

Leaders	Followers	Environment	System	Nature
360 Evaluations	Feedback	Restructure the organization	Remove Toxic Leaders	God/Religion
Self-Awareness	Undermine		Counseling	Self-Awareness
			Term limits	
Leadership				
Accountability				
Confront				
Tolerate				

## Conclusion

One area for future study is to validate the theories (Tables 1-7) presented in this research paper. This proposed research should analyze data from identified toxic leaders, their previous supervisors, subordinates, and the organization's environment/culture (training, governance, etc). Currently, the majority of the data is from the subordinates and focus only on segments of the total system that the leader influences and responsible for providing feedback to the leader. The research revealed little difference in the problem when comparing the civilian sector with the military. One advantage the military has over the civilian sector is frequent job transfers, which act as term limits. Term limit is listed as a solution to remedy and prevent toxic leadership.

This research has compiled plenty of information on toxic leadership to provide a more comprehensive picture of the problem. The tables within the body of this report and in Appendix A is a tool for leaders, students, and supervisors to use for education about the topic, increased self-awareness through reflection, and identification of toxic leadership. *"It is important to recall that like a disease, toxic leadership can be contagious. One toxic leader can negatively affect dozens or hundreds of soldiers. Abused subordinates are likely to negatively affect even more personnel."*<sup>41</sup> As a result, *"the solutions proposed to combat toxic leaders will largely be ineffective if adopted slowly, or individually. This problem must be attacked simultaneously at all levels."*<sup>42</sup>

While each military branch has the responsibility to fight against and root out the wretched effects of toxic leadership, we must not forget that the majority of military leaders demonstrate high quality leadership and amazing service to our nation. It is because of this outstanding leadership that the U.S. military remains the greatest fighting force and maintains the trust of a grateful nation.



## **Appendix A**





	Focus/ Summary	Definition of Toxic Leadership Definition	Toxic Leadership Characteristics (Varies)	Toxic Leadership Behaviors (Fairly Consistent)	Outcomes of Toxic Leadership	Causes of Toxic Leadership	Solutions to correct Toxic Leadership	Ideas/Findings Unique to Study
<p>Antecedents &amp; Consequences Of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army</p> <p><i>John P. Steele</i></p> <p><i>Center for Army Leadership</i></p> <p><i>June 2011</i></p>	Highlights the prevalence, severity, & correlates/consequences of toxic Leadership in the Army.	Focused on visible short-term mission accomplishment. They provide superiors with impressive, articulate presentations and enthusiastic responses to missions. But, they are unconcerned about, or oblivious to, staff or troop morale, and or climate. They are seen by majority of subordinates as arrogant, self-serving, inflexible, and petty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Abusive</li> <li>➤ Bad leadership</li> <li>➤ Bullies</li> <li>➤ Corrosive leadership</li> <li>➤ Harassing leaders</li> <li>➤ Jerks</li> <li>➤ Assholes</li> <li>➤ Tyrannical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Avoiding subordinates</li> <li>➤ Behaving aggressively toward others</li> <li>➤ Denigrating subordinates</li> <li>➤ Hording info</li> <li>➤ Micromanagement</li> <li>➤ Blaming others for their own problems</li> <li>➤ Overly critical of work that is done well</li> <li>➤ Intimidating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mutiny (ref in Aubrey paper)</li> <li>➤ Death (ref in Aubrey paper)</li> <li>➤ Erosion of trust</li> <li>➤ Reduced effectiveness</li> <li>➤ Commitment &amp; retention</li> <li>➤ Break-down in communications</li> <li>➤ Diminished follower</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Power</li> <li>○ Personality</li> <li>○ Ideology</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Followers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Low maturity</li> <li>○ Ethics/Values</li> <li>○ Similar View</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Instability</li> <li>○ Perceived Threats</li> <li>○ Cultural Values</li> <li>○ Lacks of Checks</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ System Causes of Toxic Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Attraction</li> <li>○ Selection</li> <li>○ Attrition</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Systems level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Selection</li> <li>○ Evaluation</li> <li>○ Education</li> <li>○ Assignment</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Leader-level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evidence of emulation</li> <li>○ Training</li> <li>○ Unbiased feedback(surveys)</li> <li>○ 360 Evaluation</li> <li>○ Coaching-trained facilitators</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Follower-level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lack of emulation</li> <li>○ Direct feedback</li> <li>○ Resilience training</li> <li>○ Positive affectivity</li> <li>○ Ingratiation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Toxic Leadership Framework
<p>The Effect of Toxic Leadership</p> <p><i>Darrell W. Aubrey</i></p> <p><i>Army War College</i></p> <p><i>March 2012</i></p>	When focusing on toxic leadership, many researchers emphasize the symptoms of toxicity (individual characteristics, traits) and not the disease (culture, climate, outcomes). Failure to observe and moderate the organization's culture may result in new toxic culture.	Inwardly motivated, inherently destructive, and violate the legitimate interests of the organization. Bad leadership that left unchecked compromises the organization's values and norms, and promotes noncompliant behaviors.	Not Specifically Discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Arbitrary</li> <li>➤ Unethical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Control/negatively influence the values, norms, and behaviors of the organizations for years.</li> <li>➤ Undermine organizational values by redefining the organization's goals and assigning importance (creates an environment for emulation of toxic leader).</li> <li>➤ A positive culture is based on positive shared norms. Members may come to see toxic leadership as normal, and conform willingly.</li> <li>➤ Subordinates who perceive that their supervisors are more abusive are less satisfied with their job...and less willing to perform pro-social behaviors (initiative, helping, and loyalty).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Toxic leaders do not occur spontaneously, they require a culture and system to sustain and empower them. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Migration- changes in structure or work assignments designed to accommodate a toxic person.</li> <li>○ Enabling or overlooking negative behaviors to retain a productive toxic person. (allows emulation)</li> <li>○ Failure to place limits on power or to recognize toxic behavior in subordinates.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regulate moderating behaviors</li> <li>➤ Improve methods of organizational governance (possibly prevents emulation)</li> <li>➤ Follower-level solutions (Whistle-blowing)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Initiative provided by the chain of command structure may allow space for toxic behaviors.</li> <li>➤ Produce results (short lived)</li> </ul>
<p>Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army</p> <p><i>Colonel Denise F. Williams</i></p> <p><i>Army War College</i></p> <p><i>March 2005</i></p>	This paper examined literature on destructive leadership styles. It consolidated expert views on the personal characteristics of toxic leadership and compiled a taxonomy of eighteen types of toxic leaders.	Leaders who take part in destructive behaviors and show signs of dysfunctional personal characteristics. <b>To count as toxic, these behaviors and qualities of character must inflict some reasonably serious and enduring harm on their followers and their organization.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Incompetence</li> <li>➤ Malfunctioning</li> <li>➤ Maladjusted</li> <li>➤ Sense Of Inadequacy</li> <li>➤ Malcontent</li> <li>➤ Irresponsible</li> <li>➤ Amoral</li> <li>➤ Cowardice</li> <li>➤ Insatiable Ambition</li> <li>➤ Egotism</li> <li>➤ Arrogance</li> <li>➤ Selfish Values</li> <li>➤ Avarice And Greed</li> <li>➤ Lack Of Integrity</li> <li>➤ Deception</li> <li>➤ Malevolent</li> </ul>	Not Specifically Discussed	Have poisonous effects that cause serious harm to their organizations and their followers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Aspect of human nature – due to failure to achieve hierarchical needs (Maslow).</li> <li>➤ Inherent paradoxical nature of leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Some of the toxic leadership types reflect some desired qualities of military leadership (in moderation).</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Inadequate development (i.e. Mentors...positive role model to emulate)</li> </ul>	Believes it is unlikely toxic leadership can be eliminated – only managed (reduced).	<p>Types of Toxic Leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Absentee</li> <li>➤ Incompetent</li> <li>➤ Codependent</li> <li>➤ Passive-Aggressive</li> <li>➤ Busybody</li> <li>➤ Paranoid</li> <li>➤ Rigid</li> <li>➤ Controller</li> <li>➤ Compulsive</li> <li>➤ Intemperate</li> <li>➤ Enforcer</li> <li>➤ Narcissistic</li> <li>➤ Callous</li> <li>➤ Street Fighter</li> <li>➤ Corrupt</li> <li>➤ Insular</li> <li>➤ Bully</li> <li>➤ Evil</li> </ul>

	Focus/ Summary	Definition of Toxic Leadership Definition	Toxic Leadership Characteristics (Varies)	Toxic Leadership Behaviors (Fairly Consistent)	Outcomes of Toxic Leadership	Causes of Toxic Leadership	Solutions to correct Toxic Leadership	Ideas/Findings Unique to Study	
			➤ Malicious ➤ Malfeasance						
<b>Toxic Leadership in the Military Profession</b>  <i>Colonel John E. Box</i>  <i>Army War College</i>  <i>January 2012</i>	This paper highlights the nature, frequency, severity, and trepidations of toxic leadership in the military and recommends three strategies for adoption to shape a more positive and effective leadership culture and policy for the future.	Leaders who take part in destructive behaviors and show signs of dysfunctional personal characteristics.	➤ Self-confidence ➤ Magnetic enthusiasm ➤ Unrelenting ➤ Lacks empathy ➤ Lack of restraint ➤ Ability to charm supervisors ➤ Manipulate people ➤ Forge quick relationships ➤ Charming ➤ Personal inadequacy ➤ Maladjusted ➤ Malcontent ➤ Malevolent ➤ Mistrust	Micro-Manager (micromanagement with a hidden agenda)	➤ Inhabits organizational growth ➤ Slowing of progress	Not Specifically Discussed	Create a committee to coach, teach and mentor all future brigade and battalion commanders	The toxic leader's self-confidence, magnetic enthusiasm, and unrelenting drive to attain prestige and power enable them to climb the rungs of power and to be effective in some aspects of leadership.	
		Commanders who put their own needs first, micro-managed subordinates, behaved in a mean spirited manner or displayed poor decision making.		Pretender (rejection of others opinions and ideas exhibiting unethical behavior)			Multi-Rater Assessments (360-degree multi-source assessment)		
		Show an apparent lack of concern for the well-being of subordinates; personality or interpersonal technique negatively affects the organizational climate; if a conviction is held by subordinates that the leader is motivated primarily by self-interest "designed to advance them over the carcasses of their subordinates.		Egomaniac (manipulation of people and things)			Academic institution reform (improve leadership training/ education).		
		Those who abuse the power they wield, particularly over subordinates, to serve and satisfy personal ends.							
<b>Surviving Toxic Leaders-</b>  <b>How to work for flawed people in churches, schools, and Christian Organizations</b>  <i>Kenneth O. Gangel</i>  <i>WIPF &amp; STOCK 2008</i>	A view of toxic leadership within Christian Organizations. Specifically, book provides a characteristics or toxic leaderships, discuss causes of toxic leadership, and how to cope with flawed leaders.	Instead of a definition, the author provides 8 characteristics of a toxic leader, but labels the characteristics - leader types.	➤ Deceptive ➤ Autocratic ➤ Egotistic ➤ Incompetent ➤ Ignorant ➤ Cruel ➤ Evil ➤ Demanding	➤ Stifling Destructive Criticism ➤ Misleading Followers ➤ Promoting Incompetence ➤ Lack Of Integrity ➤ Insatiable Ambition ➤ Enormous Ego ➤ Arrogance ➤ Amorality ➤ Avarice ➤ Cowardice ➤ Failure both to understand the nature of relevant problems	Toxic Organizations ○ Eventual failure to carry out the mission	➤ The Disbursement of knowledge and power within an organization. ➤ Sin	➤ Publically admit any behavior which has caused your people hurt or discouragement. ➤ Ask for forgiveness and prayer and make someone you trust a monitor of your public behavior. ➤ Be patient.	➤ From the Christian perspective	
<b>Critical Perspectives On Leadership Emotion, Toxicity, and Dysfunction</b>  <i>Jeanette Lemmergaard</i>	How emotions influence leadership. Recognizing the mere fact that leaders are normal human beings with both ideal and flawed behaviors, habits and emotions. Acknowledging that leaders, whom we expect to 'be themselves' and express personality authentically in all their	Normal by-products of organizational life that can have serious negative effects on individuals and their organizations.	Not Specifically Discussed	➤ Harassment ➤ Bullying ➤ Intimidation ➤ Interrogation ➤ Surveillance ➤ Subjugation ➤ Discrimination ➤ Exclusion	Serious negative effects on individuals and their organizations.	Emotions; Being Human.	Developing self-insight Maintaining self-control	➤ Leaders remain susceptible to human vulnerabilities and therefore will be good and bad, rather than good or bad; ethical and immoral rather than ethical or immoral; competent and incompetent rather than competent or incompetent. ➤ Senior members are likely to freer in their emotional	

Focus/ Summary		Definition of Toxic Leadership Definition	Toxic Leadership Characteristics (Varies)	Toxic Leadership Behaviors (Fairly Consistent)	Outcomes of Toxic Leadership	Causes of Toxic Leadership	Solutions to correct Toxic Leadership	Ideas/Findings Unique to Study	
<i>and Sara Louise Muhr</i>  <i>Edward Elgar Publishing Limited</i>	uniqueness and difference (Fleming 2009; Fleming & Sturdy 2009) will fascinate and attract some while intimidate and corral others (muhr 2010; muhr 2011).			➤ Physical Violence				expression than those in junior position (making them more susceptible to error).	
<b>The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians – and How We Can Survive Them</b>  <i>Jean Lipman – Blumen</i>  <i>Oxford University Press 2005</i>	In this book, I examine why toxic leaders –fascinate and attract followers. It focuses on how employees, voters, parishioners, fans, board members, and often the media remain in the thrall of toxic leaders, even when they clearly recognize the cynicism, corruption, and cruelty those leaders displays.	Leaders who engage in numerous destructive behaviors and who exhibit certain dysfunctional personal characteristics. <b>To count as toxic, these behaviors and qualities of character must inflict some reasonably serious and enduring harm on their followers and their organization.</b>	➤ Lack Of Integrity	Leaving their followers (& nonfollowers) worse off than they found them.	Toxic impact (Serious harm to their organizations and their followers) ○ Genocide ○ Ineffectiveness ○ Declining proficiency ○ Failure to develop leaders	➤ Lack of accountability ➤ Leaders are human – with both negative and positive tendencies. ➤ Psychological needs of followers. ➤ Enormous Ego that blinds leaders to the shortcomings of their own character and thus limit their capacity for self-renewal.	We may do the following concerning Toxic Leaders: ○ Tolerate ○ Confront ○ Counsel ○ Undermine ○ Overthrow ○ Leave the organization ○ Impose term limits	<b>Detecting The First Symptoms Of Toxicity In A Nontoxic Leader:</b>	
			➤ Insatiable Ambition prompts leaders to put their own sustained power, glory, and fortunes above followers’ well-being	Violating the basic standards of human rights of their own supporters.				Inflicts harm on your enemy competitors, then gradually others.	Begins to display arrogance and excessive pride.
			➤ Enormous Ego that blinds leaders to the shortcomings of their own character and thus limit their capacity for self-renewal.	Consciously feeding their followers illusions that enhance their power & impair the followers’ capacity to act independently.				Begins to keep their own counsel or take counsel only from a few advisors (yes-men)	Uses others to do his or her dirty work and then disown them.
			➤ Arrogance	Playing to the basest fears and needs of the followers.				Mistreats the lowest and weakest mbrs.	Engage in excesses or fail to demonstrate sufficient leadership capacity.
			➤ Amorality prevents acknowledging their mistakes and instead leads to blaming other.	Stifling constructive criticism and teaching supporters to comply with, rather than to question, the leader’s judgment and actions.				Evasive, refusing to explain his or her decisions or event lying outright.	Blame others for his or her decisions and deeds.
			➤ Avarice	Misleading Followers				Act in their self-interest instead of the interest of the whole organization.	Disguise dubious actions as noble and altruistic.
			<b>Detecting Toxic Seeds With The Vision:</b>						
			➤ Failure to understand and to act competently and effectively in leadership situations.	Building totalitarian or narrowly dynastic regimes.				Positive for your group but detrimental to innocent others.	Makes us large at the cost of making others small.
			➤ Reckless disregard for the costs of their actions to others as well as to themselves	Failing to nurture other leaders.				Turns evil into moral virtue or moral virtue into weakness.	Leader is a savior that destroys competitor.
			➤ Cynicism	Maliciously setting constituents against one another.				Views others as enemies who must me	Requires great demand.

Focus/ Summary	Definition of Toxic Leadership Definition	Toxic Leadership Characteristics (Varies)	Toxic Leadership Behaviors (Fairly Consistent)	Outcomes of Toxic Leadership	Causes of Toxic Leadership	Solutions to correct Toxic Leadership	Ideas/Findings Unique to Study	
<p>The Allure of Toxic Leaders</p> <p><i>Jean Lipman – Blumen</i></p> <p><i>Oxford University Press 2005</i></p>			➤ Greed	Treating their own followers well, but persuading them to hate others.			ostracized.	
			➤ Narcissism	Identifying scapegoats and group discord			Stands the test of time and judgment of others.	
			➤ Paranoia	Structuring the costs of overthrowing them as a trigger for the downfall of the system they lead.				
			➤ Megalomania	Ignoring or promoting incompetence, cronyism, and corruption.				
			➤ Moral Blindspots	Engaging in unethical, illegal and criminal acts.			➤	
<p>Toxic Leaders - When Organizations Go Bad</p> <p><i>Marcia Lynn Whicker</i></p> <p><i>Quorum Books 1996</i></p>	<p>This book is about how toxic leaders are driven to destructive actions and how to recognize them. It explores the difference between good and bad leadership and the lows to which toxic leaders cause us to plummet.</p>	<p>Maladjusted, malcontent, and often malevolent, even malicious. They succeed by tearing others down. They glory in turf protection, fighting, and controlling rather than uplifting followers. Their leadership plummets productivity and applies brakes to organizational growth, causing progress to screech to a halt. With a deep-seated inadequacy but well disguised sense of personal inadequacy, a focus on selfish values, and cleverness at deception.</p>	<p>➤ Deep-seated feeling of inadequacy</p> <p>➤ Selfish Values</p> <p>➤ Deception</p> <p>➤ Maladjusted</p> <p>➤ Malcontent</p> <p>➤ Malevolent</p> <p>➤ Technically skilled</p> <p>➤ Manipulative</p> <p>➤ Egotistical</p> <p>➤ Charismatic</p>	<p>➤ The Enforcer – seeks consensus with the leaders to whom they report, often other toxic and transitional leaders, rather than with followers.</p> <p>➤ The Street Fighter – Egotistical and often charismatic, they have a “king of the mountain” syndrome who are driven to dominate through gang politics.</p> <p>➤ The Bully – pugnacious leaders who are mad at the world and jealous of others who outperform them.</p> <p>➤ Protects turf</p> <p>➤ Controlling</p> <p>➤ Ability to navigate the organization</p>	<p>➤ Organizational decline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stage 1: Disappointment and disillusionment</li> <li>○ Stage 2: Outrage and contempt</li> <li>○ Stage 3: Divisiveness (factions &amp; covert warfare)</li> <li>○ Stage 4: Open warfare</li> <li>○ Stage 5: Siege mentality (appeal to higher authority)</li> <li>○ Stage 6: Isolation and Alienation (complete divisiveness)</li> </ul>	<p>Failure to personally achieve Maslow’s level four dealing with esteem or level five dealing with self-actualization and giving.</p> <p><i>Their deep-seated sense of inadequacy has arrested their personal development.</i></p>	<p>Expanding the organizational resource base.</p> <p>Removing toxic leaders</p> <p>Restructuring the organization</p> <p>Abolish the organization</p>	➤

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Kenneth O. Gangel, *Surviving Toxic Leaders: How to Work for Flawed People in Churches, Schools, and Christian Organizations*. (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock, 2008), pg. 2.
- <sup>2</sup> Doty, Joe and Fenlason, Jeff, *Narcissism and Toxic Leaders*, Military Review, Jan/Feb 2013, Vol. 93 Issue 1, pg. 55.
- <sup>3</sup> Leadership Training Tutorials & Articles. “Defining Leadership.”  
[http://leadershiptrainingtutorials.com/index.php?q=Why\\_is\\_Leadership\\_so\\_Important#.VhdYvK1dFdg](http://leadershiptrainingtutorials.com/index.php?q=Why_is_Leadership_so_Important#.VhdYvK1dFdg)  
(assessed on 8 October 2015).
- <sup>4</sup> John P. Steele, *Antecedents & Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*, Center for Army Leadership June 2011, pg. 2.
- <sup>5</sup> Darrell W. Aubrey, *The Effect of Toxic Leadership*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College, 2012, pg. 2.
- <sup>6</sup> John P. Steele, *Antecedents & Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*, Center for Army Leadership June 2011, pg. 4.
- <sup>7</sup> Steven B. Sample, *The Contrarian’s Guide to Leadership*, (San Fransico, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), pg. 1.
- <sup>8</sup> Lipman Blumen, *Allure of Toxic Leadership*, pg. 18.
- <sup>9</sup> Steele, *Antecedents & Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*, pg. 24.
- <sup>10</sup> John P. Steele, *Antecedents & Consequences of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Army*, Center for Army Leadership June 2011, pg. 2.
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